Present: Dennis Arnett, Kathy Austin, Stefanie Borst, Ashlee Brown, Bobbie Brown, Jim Bret Campbell, Adrienne Carnes, Savannah Chambers for Cindy Akers Todd Chambers, Cathy Duran, Genevieve Durham DeCesaro, Keith Dye, Paul Frazier, Sheila Gray for Jamie Hansard, Saif Haq, Melanie Hart, Annette Hernandez, Sheila Hoover, Lynn Huffman, Patrick Hughes, Jorge Iber, Darryl James, Michelle Kiser, Amy Koerber, Robin Lock, Justin Louder, Andrew Martin, Pat McConnel, Garrett McKinnon, David Roach, Brian Shannon, Brian Steele, Rob Stewart chair, Patricia Vitela, Vicki West

Guests: Wendy Arnett, Brenda Martinez, Thayne Montague

Action Items:
1. Associate Deans are asked to encourage their area heads to contact the Office of Student Success and Retention if they would like assistance with the calling campaign to re-enroll students who are presently in good standing and as yet un-enrolled for the fall term. Area heads can contact Associate Vice Provost Patrick Hughes (patrick.hughes@ttu.edu) for additional information and resources.
2. Associate Deans are asked to remind area heads to complete small course reporting for May-mester and Summer 1 as soon as possible. Changes to faculty member or administrator who has access to the small course portal can be made by contacting Heather Eaton (heather.n.eaton@ttu.edu) in the Registrar’s office.

Stewart called the meeting to order and acknowledged a number of visitors and new members to Academic Council. He then introduced the minutes from April. With no corrections or revisions suggested, the minutes were approved by silent acclamation.

Hughes gave a presentation on retention efforts at the university. He said one of President Schovanec’s primary initiatives was to keep track of students and encourage reenrollment, especially for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. Hughes said that university-wide the reenrollment goal for FTIC students is 85 percent, and that the university stood at 80.17 percent as of the meeting date, a number largely unchanged year-to-date from the 2015-2016 academic year. He reminded those in attendance that looming suspensions would reduce that retention rate somewhat, and also provided tips and reminders for improving retention.

Durham DeCesaro discussed a proposal to change the wording of the university’s institutional foreign language requirement. She noted that the present requirement stipulates that a student graduating from TTU should be able to “express, negotiate, and
interpret meaning in a second language.” In order to make the requirement clearer and more representative, she said the new requirement would include two semesters of first-year foreign language or one semester of sophomore-level foreign language provided that a student had taken two years of foreign language at the high school level. A detailed comparison between the existing and proposed language was provided as an attachment to the May 2017 Academic Council agenda. T. Chambers moved to approve the new language as presented, Huffman seconded, and the motion was approved.

Durham DeCesaro also addressed a proposed policy clarification regarding catalog selection for Texas Tech students. The proposed change would clarify how students would be placed into catalogs upon enrolling, transferring to, or returning to the university. A question was raised as to whether the new policy would apply to graduate students. Another question was raised as to how long a catalog remained active, and Durham DeCesaro replied that catalogs were active for seven years. Any student who required longer than seven years to earn a degree could be moved into a new catalog. Durham DeCesaro offered to do additional research into how the new language would apply to graduate students, and would resubmit the proposal in June.

The Council heard a proposal to offer a B.A. in Digital Media and Professional Communication at the university’s Hill College site. After a brief discussion, Huffman moved to approve the proposal, Lock seconded, and the motion was approved.

McKinnon presented the summary of course approvals for the month. ENGL 3363 and 4363, which had been tabled at a previous meeting, were discussed, with Koerber noting that the Department of Communication Studies had signed off on the new courses after minor revisions were made: the proposed name of ENGL 3363 changed from Introduction to Scientific Rhetoric to Introduction to Scientific Writing, and syllabus changes were made to ENGL 4363. Roach moved to move ENGL 3363 and 4363 off the table, Koerber seconded, and the motion was approved. (CHEM 4101, tabled at a previous meeting, remained tabled.) After a brief discussion regarding word use in course objectives, T. Chambers moved to approve the courses as presented and/or amended, Iber seconded, and the motion was approved.

The Council also discussed program changes moving through the Curriculog curriculum management system:

• A proposal to rename the Ed.D. in Higher Education as the Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration.
• A proposal to rename the B.A. in Electronic Media & Communication as the B.A. in Creative Media Industries.
• A proposal to increase the required credit hours for the Ph.D. in Interior and Environmental Design to 73 from 72.
• A proposal to increase the required credit hours for the M.S. in Hospitality and Retail Management to 34 from 33.
• A proposal to reduce the required credit hours for the M.S. in Environmental Design to 34 from 36.
Koerber moved to approve the proposed program changes as presented, Lock seconded, and the motion was approved.

The Council heard an information item regarding a new concentration in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences named Local Food and Wine Production. The concentration would have a component at both the main TTU campus and the Fredericksburg campus. Montague noted that the focus of the concentration would be on urban food production, and that a number of courses to support the concentration were under development. He added that the department hoped the new concentration would increase student enrollment.

Durham DeCesaro inquired whether council members would like to retain a PDF summary of courses and programs under consideration via the Curriculog system, or to monitor those courses and programs online. The consensus was to retain a PDF summary of those courses and programs as well as using the Curriculog system.

Council members heard an information item regarding changes to the minor in Athletic Coaching. Roach said some course changes were involved, and the minor would now be offered online in addition to face-to-face.

Durham DeCesaro provided an update on core curriculum. She noted that the THECB had approved a couple of courses for inclusion into the core curriculum, but rejected others. She also noted that the THECB was taking a closer look at what she termed “skills-based courses,” and that the state wanted to identify and remove skills-based courses from core curriculum. She indicated these courses were largely in the areas of humanities, foreign language, and arts, but that several existing courses in the university’s core curriculum had been identified and would be removed from the core curriculum effective with the 2019-2020 academic year. The courses consisted of music, theatre arts, and English courses.

Durham DeCesaro next presented a proposal to redesign the format of the university’s commencement ceremonies. She said that the forthcoming ceremonies included one event (the scheduled 1:30 ceremony on Saturday, May 20) at which so many students were scheduled to participate they would not fit on the practice court at the United Supermarkets Arena. She indicated that the commencement committee was increasingly worried about accommodating graduates and their guests, but that adding an additional ceremony was not deemed a suitable option due to the overall length of the combined group of ceremonies and the fatigue factor for all those involved in overseeing the four separate events. The reconfigured commencement ceremony would have colleges conducting individual convocation ceremonies at their own discretion at the conclusion of the fall and spring semesters, while the university held a unified commencement ceremony in May in Jones AT&T Stadium. The unified ceremony would not recognize individual graduates, but would be highlighted by high-profile guest speakers and a post-ceremony fireworks display. Durham DeCesaro said this type of ceremony would be on par with what many of Texas Tech’s peer institutions held. She also indicated that the university would be doing away with August graduations altogether. Many questions were raised about the proposal, with Durham DeCesaro answering council members’ concerns thusly:
• Hooding ceremonies for Ph.D. graduates would take place during individual college-level convocations.
• Students who graduated at any time throughout the academic year would be eligible to participate in the combined commencement ceremony.
• College-level convocation ceremonies would recognize individual students.
• In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony would be cancelled.

She indicated that the proposal would be introduced to Faculty, Staff, and Student Senates during the fall semester, and multiple town halls would be held to discuss the proposal throughout the fall semester. She said the plan would ultimately have a final report submitted to the Board of Regents during their scheduled meeting in February 2018. The final August commencement ceremony would be held in August 2018, and inaugural college-level convocations would begin in December 2018. The initial general commencement ceremony would be held in May 2019.

Stewart updated the Council on small course reporting, and requested completion of those reports within coming days.

Stewart also noted that the university had reached over 95 percent compliance with textbook ordering for the summer sessions. He gave credit to departments and faculty for their attention to the matter, and noted that early textbook ordering had saved students at the university an estimated $800,000 during the past year. Similar timeliness by faculty in listing textbooks would is estimated to possibly save students more than $1 million during the coming academic year, he said.

In other business:
• Stewart said that the SmartEvals electronic course evaluation system had been piloted during the spring semester, and that several colleges had opted to fully utilize the system. He said data from the evaluations would be available to faculty once the Registrar has certified final grades as complete. He noted that participation rates for SmartEvals were slightly lower – 63% -- than participation rates for the traditional paper/pencil evaluations – 68%, indicating the electronic evaluation rates are on par with paper/pencil forms. He indicated that the university would like to see this figure raised, and that a communication plan will be made to encourage better utilization of the new electronic system by faculty and students.
• McKinnon noted that print catalogs were being distributed across campus.
• Stewart distributed a handout prepared by the Registrar’s office explaining space utilization efficiency scores.
• Louder noted that 24/7 tech support was now available for Blackboard.
• Durham DeCesaro noted that the university was hosting the fourth annual Big 12 Teaching and Learning Conference in June, and urged Council members to encourage participation.

With no other business raised, Stewart adjourned the meeting.